832
[291]
[516]
[417]

Fig. 57. Washing the Forehead at the Love Medicine Festival.

times, and in the case of very recalcitrant drops, the medicine was wiped down the bridge of the nose with a bundle of Abutilon leaves. The festive company then moved to the cult [778] place, in this case called a love grove (elik andʏmăn). Just as the cult figures are usually set up on the trees (because of the [824] sorcerous beings, trees with spikes are chosen) and just as the [532] medicines for wealth are made up under the soul tree, the Copaifera, in the same way the love tree belongs to the love grove, namely the Leguminosa Amphimas tessmannii Harms (edĭi) (1). In Ebăngon the tree was only a small one, but

1. a dĭi-á, "to love."

often they are huge specimens. In the background a kind of bench of rods was erected, and under it were heaped a great many twigs of various trees regarded as love medicine. Then the ancestral skulls were set up behind the bench, and the twigs ignited. Those persons who needed an improvement in their love affairs, /161/ /Fig. 57 appears here in the original text/ lay down on the bench and allowed themselves to be thoroughly

776 been realized, he rewards these bivur by giving them a member of his family: father, mother, brother, first wife, first child, or maternal uncle.

776 778 The person eaten by the bivur dies, and the beneficiary of the akaŋa must take a portion of the body and keep it all his life. This will be a protecting fetish.

For example, a man has offered his father. When the corpse has rotted in the grave, he goes and extracts a tooth and gives it to the beyem who, at the time of the akaŋa, had told him to take it. These beyem, or at least those who have not died by this time, meet again under the ovah where they cause an evur to dwell in the tooth and order it to make all its guardian's wishes come true. The wishes made at the time of the akaŋá are renewed, this time in the form of an order to the evur which takes its place in the tooth. The latter is then given back to its owner who, in order to hide it, swallows it or keeps it enclosed in a box carefully hidden in his hut so that no one sees it, not even his wives or children. Before accomplishing anything at all, he must first speak to the tooth, invoking the evur so that it will come to his aid.

If it is the first wife who has been given to the bivur, the husband removes a piece of frontal bone from the corpse, which receives an evur in the same way as the tooth described above. This bone is placed in a box full of oil, and every time the owner of the fetish appeals to this evur he must anoint his face with the oil in which the bone is soaked. [72]

Sometimes instead of a tooth or a bone, flesh is removed. The removal is then made in the night following the burial. The beyem dry the piece of flesh and incorporate an evur in it. In order to invoke this evur the owner of the fetish must put the piece of dried flesh in his mouth.

The possessor of an evur is forbidden to have any other fetish than that prescribed for him by the akaŋa.

776 (2) Evil evur. The evil evur, like the good, is given at the moment of birth. It may also come from an evur given the child in its mother's womb with which the nem donor does not concern himself at birth, or from a good evur whose owner has broken a prohibition of the akaŋa.

There is no akaŋa for an evil evur.

the victim exonerate the murderer, admitting that what happened was his own fault and that he had changed himself into an antelope so as not to frighten the hunted monkey. Not for an instant did the Pahouin of the district dream of doubting the truth of the story, and each recalled the exploits of the dead man who, thanks to his ability to change himself, had several times lived among gorillas and panthers, whose young he had brought back as proof of his double existence.

In September, 1933, in the village of Ebabara on the Abanga, a woman, Ningone Obame, told us how her husband, Obiang Abugo, transformed into an elephant, killed her little daughter: One day she saw Obiang come into the hut in the form of a bird, and he asked her to give him the little girl to look after him. Ningone refused. To punish her, Obiang caused her to have an abscess on her breast. A few days after this, she went fishing in a side channel of the river, Obiang staying in camp with the child. Suddenly Ningone felt her head get heavy and her heart beat fast. She was frightened and returned to the camp where she found her husband lying asleep. The little daughter was not there. Ningone went out, called her, and suddenly saw her dead, trampled by Obiang in the shape of an elephant. At this point Obiang, the elephant, promised to give her a boy in place of the little girl. Ningone went back to the camp. Obiang was still lying down and continued to sleep. She waked him up and accused him of the death of her daughter. Obiang did not deny it and said he had to kill her so that his own evur would not die. Nevertheless, he died two or three days afterwards.

Ningone told us this story in the presence of all the inhabitants of the village and numerous listeners from neighboring villages, all of whom considered the incident normal and only discussed the question of whether, because of the crime committed by Obiang's evur, Ningone should, or should not, pay back the dowry to her dead husband's family.

(4) Protection against the bivur. In spite of all the acknowledged power of the evur, the Pahouin seek to protect themselves against it. For this there is an essential fetish called mvul, or byah bivur. Upon the death of a person suspected of having had an evur which fed upon human blood, the abdomen of the corpse is opened and a search is made for the evur. [74] This, it seems, is like a crab; it has a small mouth with little teeth; its claws form long veins that go into every part of the body. Once the evur is found, its belly is opened, and if it

has lived on human flesh, a piece of the flesh is found. That piece of flesh is taken out and put into an antelope horn together with scrapings of a vine called nzi bivur, a panther claw (dze nze), the talon of a sparrow hawk, and a firefly. The end of the horn is closed with the wax of white honey (eko abe).

The fetish thus made is either carried by the person who wishes to protect himself or is hung at the door of the hut. At night, if the bivur wish to enter the hut, the firefly will leave the horn and fly into the hut, giving warning of their approach. Then there is a battle (abal nguel, the war of the ngwel) between the bivur and the horn fetish, from which the fetish almost always emerges victor.

III. The bieri. The bieri is a family fetish whose help must be sought before every important undertaking: hunting, fishing, a journey, choice of farm land, etc..., by the head of the family who owns the fetish.

It consists of the skull of a dead ancestor taken from the grave by a practitioner after the complete disappearance of the flesh. After having taken the skull, the practitioner goes into the forest and makes from the bark of a tree called andun (Berlinia sp.) a cylindrical box with a lid, big enough to hold the skull. The bottom of the box and the top of the lid are formed by a circular disc of wood nailed into the bark cylinder with little pegs of hard wood. The practitioner then cleans the skull and anoints it with an ointment of red wood sawdust (ba) and oil of raphia palm. The box is called nsek and the skull sen bieri, the whole having the name of bieri. Into the box is also placed some red wood sawdust and a plant called nzen (a kind of fern), and sometimes also a little wooden bowl. The bieri thus made is put in a hidden place in the hut of the family head. It will speak in dreams to a family head whenever it wishes to notify a member of the family of some event. Sometimes a statuette roughly representing the person whose skull constitutes the main part of the fetish is put on the lid of the box. It is called nlu bieri (the head of the bieri).

No one may see the bieri unless he has eaten some alan (Strychnos icaja) in the course of a ceremony called ku melan. The heads of several families send the future initiates to look for roots of alan, of which they retain only the bark. Then in the morning each family head brings his bieri to a place prepared in advance in the bush near the

village which is called ngun [75] melan; he carries the bieri on his shoulder and appears to collapse under its weight. That position is a manner of worshipping the fetish. When everyone has gathered, animals, fowls, or kids are sacrificed; then, to the accompaniment of tomtoms, the neophytes dance, sing, and cry out, all the while chewing pieces of alan prepared the previous day. After a certain time, the effect of the root, combined with the excitement of the dances and songs, causes most of the participants of the celebration to become unconscious after many spasms. This unconsciousness may last two or three hours, during which the individuals retain a corpse-like stiffness. On awakening, each tells the elders what he has seen or what the bieri has told him in his dream. One may have been ordered to hunt, with the assurance of killing many antelope; another may have been warned of the impending death of a member of his family; still another may have been told of the imminent pregnancy of a brother's wife. All the Pahouin whom we have questioned state that predictions made by the bieri to people drunk with alan always come true.

Then the neophytes have the right to look at the bieri, whose boxes are open, making a vow not to speak of them to anyone who has not undergone the initiation of alan. Every uninitiated person who looks at a bieri falls ill, and only the care of a competent practitioner can prevent his death.

When a family head wants to supplicate his bieri, he sacrifices a hen, a duck, or a kid, or offers it the hind leg of an animal killed in the hunt, and pours blood on the skull. The meat is cooked in leaves by a woman, then taken to the bieri with stalks of manioc or a mash of bananas and water, by the one making the sacrifice. If, for example, the bieri is appealed to before a hunt, he who makes the sacrifice presents the food with these words:

"O *tar ta mbe bidzi olun wa to we nlem o to ma tune we yĕ. Binyu bon be wa y onzan vag bie betsir*" (O father, see the good food, I want to dispel the anger that is in your heart. Your children die of want, give us meat).

Then he goes out of the hut because the bieri will not eat in the presence of a living being. Several hours later he comes back to look for the food left by the bieri. Its consumption, however, is not visible as it is accomplished immaterially. This food that has been brought to the watchers' hut [corps de garde] will be eaten only by the

initiates. Anyone else who eats it will become mortally ill. During the following night, the bieri will reveal to an initiate during his sleep the means of assuring the success of the hunt for which his help has been asked.

The bieri strictly forbids anyone, under pain of mortal illness, to [76] insult it. Its power is unlimited. It can cause a woman who has fled from the village to return to it, it causes lost objects to be found.

In spite of all the faith which the old Pahouin still have in the bieri, in the region which interests us one may say that the majority of the population has abandoned it, primarily because of its being driven out by the Christian missions.

IV. The buiti. The buiti, which our informants told us were of Mitsogho [Mitsogo] or Massango [Misanga?] origin (peoples of the right bank of the N'Gounié), is a protective association against the bivur. The information on this secret society was given us by Akam Eyene, the head of a buiti, who lived in the village Elong Eko on the Abanga. It is rather incomplete because this informant was unwilling to give us certain details and to answer numerous questions.

Possessors of bieri band together because of the fear of the bivur, against which the bieri by itself is powerless to protect them. Their association, the buiti, in its fight against the ngwei, shows itself as stronger and kills the bivur (and consequently the individual possessors of bivur). It also serves to reveal the beyem, who have evil intentions toward members of the buiti and to make their efforts ineffectual.

Every member of the buiti brings a piece of his bieri and a piece of the animal under whose protection he has placed himself. All of these are put in a box and constitute the fetish of the association, which also keeps such material things as:

A musical instrument, ngomi, a harp with eight strings. At the bottom of the resonance chamber of the one belonging to Akam Eyene were pierced three holes covered by three pieces of flesh of chimpanzee, gorilla, snake, elephant, eagle, panther, and rooster. This instrument accompanies the songs of the ceremony.

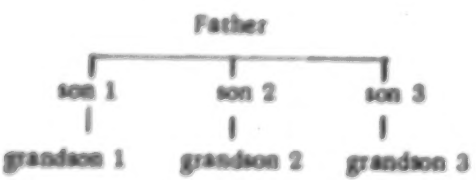
A bell, enoge, a round hollowed-out fruit, into which are put little pebbles. It is equipped with a handle and is shaken during the songs.

A branch of raphia palm lying horizontally on two carved stakes called minsaga mi buiti. The whole thing is called obaka. During the ceremonies this branch is beaten with two sticks.

where they enjoy great esteem and are consulted every time on decisions concerning all the family, [91] such as the marriage of a child, because this is a matter of alliance with another tribe, or such as moving the village. Young people of a poor family who get themselves adopted may be incorporated into the family and assimilated among its children. The adopted son (ntob) gets a wife from the head of the family which has taken him in. This wife, however, is only loaned to him, and the children whom he may have do not belong to him and are regarded as being of the adopter's family whose name they receive.

Each family has a fetish all its own, which is handed down through the oldest sons. It is often a reed (ayan) which is planted behind the huts of the village where the family lives, by a practitioner in the course of an important ceremony. The practitioner digs a hole, puts into it the bones of a member of the family killed by the bivur, spits onto it some wild pepper that he has chewed, and, before planting the reed, says, "ke nzue, ke wone, me nga non we bemvama e dzam ese dzah bor yĕi, o ke sile e yenege" (without stealing or hiding myself I have taken from my ancestors, so that everything which will be asked of you by this family shall happen). The reed must be treasured and constantly kept clear of weeds which might grow around it. A fowl is sacrificed to this reed by the head of the family every time he wishes to undertake an important matter, and when the village moves the plant is taken along with the bones and replanted.

Social Life. Pahouin society is limited to a group of families which make up the tribe. The latter originates from a single family, the sons of which have left to establish other families in their turn. The separation occurs almost constantly in the third generation. The formation of a tribe may be diagrammed thus:



Grandson 1 establishes a family which keeps the name of the founder; grandson 2, a family which will take the name of this grandson; and

692 or judicial. We have sufficiently stressed the diffuse character of the latter. On the other hand, certain "associations" show an organization (which is often effective outside the clan) that fills (or attempts to do so) a compensating function. This is true of the Ngil, whose role of pacification and justice extends beyond clan limits — and in spite of these limits.

6. The Associations

769 794 We have frequently pointed out the rather loose nature of the bonds which exist between even close fragments of a clan. In Gabon, because of the extreme dispersal and entanglement of the divers fragments, the "periodic gatherings" disappeared very early. No mention is made of them by early authors, except for a vague one by Father Trilles. However, these gatherings (ésulan) have been kept up in the Cameroons with the purpose of reminding the members of their solidarity and having them show it by "helping one another in kind, with money, and with days of work." (1)

1. Tradition des Yénzòk [Tradition of the Yénzòk], Archives of Ebolowa, The Cameroons.

These bonds, however, are found to be tightened at the time of the initiation of young men to the Bièri cult when the society of grown men is also strengthened. Bièri, while borrowed, according to H. Trilles, "in its form from neighboring nations" yet "remaining basically Fang," is a cult rendered to the spirits of the [778] ancestors through the agency of their skulls. It necessitates for every nd'è bòt an altar set up in the hut of the eldest, or very near it. [142] It requires sacrifices (regular and circumstantial), and it has to be consulted before every important action.

This cult confirms the continuity of the line and reveals periodically the profound unity which constitutes the continuation of the generations — at the time of sacrifices of food, the food is first "consumed" by the Bièri, then eaten by the secluded initiates (mvoma bièri) assembled in the guardhouse. It imposes a large

level that the agencies of authority, of social control, are most in evidence.

The head of the family is the senior, ntôl or ntôle môt, of the adult and active men, benya bôtô, "the true men." He is not necessarily the oldest in age, because infirm old men suffer a genuine capitis diminutio /a loss of status/. The founder of the hamlet or his eldest son can still, even if infirm, preserve a certain moral authority as father, ésa, of the family, but actual authority will then be delegated to a nya môtô chosen from his brothers, sons, or nephews, the éfo'olo (Bertaut). In principle, a jal is composed of the founder, his old relatives /parents/, his younger brothers, his children and those of his sisters, his unmarried sisters, their illegitimate children and those of his daughters. Wives do not belong to the jal; their village is referred to as jañ. Of a divorced woman one would say, a kwa jañ, "she has gone back to her village." The size of the nda bôt depends upon different factors: security, the /family/ head's authority, the fertility of the soil, etc. I have already pointed out how several mal can be gathered into a nlam, a proper village. Nowadays the menda me bôt are tending to decrease numerically and no longer to correspond to the jal, which can from now on combine several /menda me bôt/. The limited or household family is becoming more and more important, while the government-sponsored institution of village chiefship /chefferie/, although it is often only an imperfect substitute for the authority of the ntôl or the ésa, undermines that none the less. The size of an average nda bôt may be calculated at twenty /49/ persons (including the wives who do not belong to the jal), less in the towns and among the less prosperous people, more among large planters and the influential (minkukum).

The nda bôt used to be a religious, military, and economic unit. On the religious plane, the father, ésa, was the custodian of the biéti (Fang, biéri), the portable altar or ark of the ancestral cult containing the skulls of the ancestors; he made the decisions about initiations and bore their expense. The initiations have died out, and the missions have burned dozens, if not hundreds, of biéri. Security and colonial order have removed any interest in the ésa's military function. Only his economic role survives to some extent. He used to be the sole owner of the family goods (biôm), sole treasurer of income, and sole regulator of expenditures, of which the most important was the payment of "bride prices" (minsuba) for his younger brothers and his

sentences passed by their superiors. In struggling against sorcerers, it had also a medical role, which for a while outlived its police role: Bertaut (no. 110) seems to have known it only under this aspect, which did not arouse so much administrative suspicion. Allys considers it to be the "war fetish," thus agreeing, apparently, with Allégret and Largeau. Martrou and Leroux refer in this connection to "franc-juges," which recalls Bearth's description of the nsig nto of the Bané.

Very little is known about ngil rites as a whole or about their symbolism. The initiation has some traits in common with the sô: preliminary physical and moral purification, flagellation, confession, a broth for a test made of horrible substances, representation of ancestors, symbolic transition from an epicene or androgynous to a monosexual state (2), blood sacrifices. It is probable that these traits

2. Or, on the contrary, according to Stoll, transition from a monosexual state to a bisexual completion.

are to be found in all important Pahouin rites. The sacred spot was a rectangular stockade, évam, open to one side, with clay figures of the ngil and his "wife," (3) in front of which there was dug a

3. Or a single androgynous statue.

trench covered with a lattice in which initiates were hidden so as to prick the candidates with their spears when brought before the ngil after having had to climb through an ant pit (as in the sô). There was also a liana representing a python, the precise role /i.e., significance/ of which I do not know. The neophytes had to bring ancestral bones, which were kneaded into the clay of the figurines. The ceremony included a test intended to show if the neophyte was nnem (bearer of évu), which would have entailed his being put to death immediately; /64/ a blessing of the ritual spears which, according to Trilles, bore totemic designs; finally a sexual symbolism termed "obscene" by the authors mentioned, who give no further description of it.

The initiates left their houses in procession, masked or painted with white and red (mourning and rejoicing colors, respectively),

764 in neighboring villages were informed. The dead man's fellow initiates came to lift the corpse onto a stretcher-coffin of bark (1)

[177]

1. The fig-bark coffin recalls the custom, borrowed from the Pygmies, of putting the body of a chief in a hollow tree or between the buttresses of certain large trees.

[824]

The fig has an important magic role. A fig tree was planted at the founding of a new village, and slips were carried away upon migration. (J. B.)

and danced around him the funeral dance proper to their association, at which women were not allowed to be present but were shut into their huts, where they wailed in a shrill key. The grave was narrow and quite deep, with a plank or "bamboo" bed at the bottom on which the dead man was placed on his back, feet toward the west (near a river, the grave was dug parallel to the course and the feet were placed downstream, *nkè* = downstream or west). Above was built a platform of round logs on which were piled — after having been "killed" by breaking — all the personal possessions of the dead man that did not belong to the family patrimony, his weapons, tools, and jewelry. Now and then, only rarely, one of his wives would be sacrificed to keep him company (it is possible that the execution of wives convicted of having killed their husbands has been confused with a sacrifice of this kind). The grave was filled in and covered with a mound, which was sometimes provided with a flue at the head end by which "to feed" the dead man. The graves of prominent men were dug in, or in front of, their huts, those of ordinary people outside the village on the edge of the forest. Graves of family heads were guarded so as to prevent outsiders from carrying off the skull; this was cut off by the privileged heir, *ajian*, the replacement, who placed it with the other ancestral skulls in the *bièti* shrine, after dyeing it with *baa*. A statuette in umbrella-tree wood was carved and painted white, and inside it were enclosed some of the hair and a phalanx of the dead man; this was placed upon the *bièti* altar. The tibia of the dead man had previously been removed for the *ngil* rite.

[778]

[386]

Matrons, *beryé binga*, were buried by *mevungu* initiates in a ceremony which men did not attend. Ordinary women /*femmes du*

b. Ancestor Cult, Totem, Spirits

769 We have seen that practically no worship was offered to the creator Mebe'e, only to Zambe (Nzame), the first ancestor, who was invoked as the father of all. But resort to Zambe was rather exceptional; people first asked for help, meya'ale, or protection, akam, from the nearest ancestors, bimvam.

The most characteristic form of the ancestor cult was the bièti (bíéti), particularly well developed among the southernmost tribes and especially among the true Fang. Its priest was the living ancestor, the father, esa, and it had an acting hierarchy corresponding to the 787 different levels of the social structure and the clan organization, a 778 hierarchy of a religious rather than political character, as the authority which was derived from it being primarily /one of/ reverence. The main cult equipment consisted of the skulls of male ancestors, which the father, the senior, guarded in a basket, évora bièti (évoid bièti), a kind of ark which the family group carried with it during its migrations. It was a fig-bark cylindrical box, decorated with beads and clan emblems (mindem); on the cover was a statuette of the first ancestor. The évora bièti was kept on a sort of altar (the view of which was évyi to women and the uninitiated) placed either in the hut of the head of the family or in a special hut. The évora was transported in a case of delicate basketwork, guarded by armed initiates. The skulls were painted with bas and sometimes decorated with copper or bead inlay.

769 When a younger son established a new village, the founder's skull was the first to be placed in the ark; the village he had left kept the skulls of the preceding ancestors of the lineage. Hence it may be imagined that the custodian of the lineage skulls had a certain amount of authority, delegated by the ancestors of higher rank, over the heads of splinter families, while he himself was somehow /111/ subordinate to the custodian of the ancestral skulls common to the segment, and so, one after the other ascending and descending the genealogical trees, from Zambe, departed and yet alive, to the living évovam of the last generation.

When a family split up without a quarrel, the senior, nôl, of the new group received from his esa, in place of the skulls which were supposed to stay with the original segment, a statuette containing fragments of ancestral bones, phalanges, teeth, or cranial bones.

suggest those of the sorcerers they were fighting, as do some of their procedures. Like them, /high initiates/ were capable of telekinesis and bilocation, etc. Trilles gives numerous examples, some of which he claims to have observed himself. Like /sorcerers, initiates/ could transform themselves into animals or make use of a dedicated animal, élañela. They killed people from a distance, especially by casting a spell on a token /temoin, "witness"/ of the classical type, or by acting directly upon people with their power, ngul, by forcing them to submit to their will. Like sorcerers, also, they could be victims through repercussion.

Considering the circumstances, it is not surprising that /121/ magicians and sorcerers have often been confused, nor that some magicians have been led into making evil use of their knowledge, nor, finally, that contemporary associations, like the mbuti (bwiti), intended to combat sorcery, have borrowed its methods, even in their criminal aspects.

In addition to the magicians proper, there is the singer, ñyia bia, who plays an important role in all rites, including initiations. Every important rite and ceremony has its musical accompaniment, with a specific orchestra for the occasion, and a choirmaster, who leads the incantations and acts somewhat as a master of ceremonies, without himself participating directly in the sacrifice or the magical act. It is peculiar to the ñyia bia that he is present at the three major rites, bö, ngil, and ndöngö, as at all magic ceremonies, no matter what his affiliation; apparently he is not liable to the prohibitions concerning participation affecting nesé bör, ordinary or profane people. He buys and sells or inherits his songs, is not assigned to a caste /n'est pas caste/, yet seems to have enjoyed a certain immunity during the wars of former times, but this may only have been the case with the most celebrated of the beyia bia. There are also female beyia bia, who enjoy the same prerogatives in feminine rites.

Magical equipment consists, first, of the instruments appropriate to each rite, drums, horns, rattles, bells, the ngóma harp of the bwiti, etc., with a great variety of additional diverse objects: fly-whisks, akpwassa, sometimes mutilated; antelope horns filled with mebiañ; human and animal skulls and bones; pots and calabashes; engraved and decorated magician's spears; masks; the bwiti broken mirror; bikwélé (iron "bride-price money"); shells, etc. Every magical act, every rite, has its own properties, the complete description of which would require a separate monograph for each. We

778 shall merely point out that part of this equipment, permanently assigned 779 to magical use, is étyi, taboo to the uninitiated and sometimes even to other mingengan than the owner, that certain objects become bityi after having once been used for this purpose, while others are returned to ordinary use, and others are destroyed after use.

f. Prohibitions

784 Prohibitions, bityi, assume a large place in Pahouin life. Martrou (no. 159) has devoted a special study to them, which is very well documented but still incomplete, because of their number and diversity.

The word étyi comes from the root TYI/KI, conveying an idea of strength (cf. above, p. 133), of authority, and also of cutting, hence of prohibition; /for example, / tyik • to cut, kill, slice, decide; tyili • to render taboo; tyii • to have a taboo (étyi is the nominal-resulting form of the last verb); tyilan • to be taboo. /122/

A complete listing of the bityi is probably impossible, but a brief classification may be attempted by distinguishing /the following/:

Food prohibitions and prohibitions of actions.

Among prohibitions of actions there are those protecting certain animals, marriage prohibitions, and general sexual prohibitions.

Individual prohibitions and collective prohibitions.

Hereditary prohibitions and personal prohibitions.

Temporary and permanent prohibitions.

Masculine, feminine, and age-grade prohibitions.

Ordinary prohibitions (nem bityi) and capital prohibitions, bityi awu (mortal ones).

All together they form a sort of network that covers every act, 787 every phase of individual and social conduct. Mission activity and general development have caused some to disappear or have lessened the immediate consequences of infractions, mimem, but enough remain with sufficient sanction to influence the whole of day-to-day life.

788 A nsem, a breaking of a prohibition, has various consequences, ranging from a slight illness to death, and almost always carrying with it public reprobation. The nsem may be unconscious, the culprit being unaware that his act was taboo for him, either because he had not been taught so or because the étyi had been imposed without his knowledge by a magician.

one thereby becomes incorporated in him and in the tribe. Finally, the taboo surrounding this organ of the body, to which the origin of circumcision may be traced -- either because of the social function of the organ or of the danger of its premature use, or even because of its independence of volition -- allows circumcision to be considered as a desecration that has to precede the stage of virility, in order that use may be made of it. (2)

2. Bros, Religion des peuples non-civilisees [Religion of Non-civilized Peoples], "Circoncision" [Circumcision].

Some of these statements hold good for the Fan; some are less applicable. Let me use as an example one of the things that illustrates very well the close connection between circumcision as a religious rite and childbirth rituals, the fact that pieces of cloth used to staunch blood are in both cases carefully kept to be used for the same purpose. [520]

Ordinary warriors place them with their personal totem in the mfek or pineapple-fiber bag which never leaves them. These pieces of cloth, or fragments of them, are always part of totemic sacrifices. The sons of chiefs, on the contrary, are not allowed to keep them; they bury them deep at the base of the sacred fig tree planted when they were born over the remains of the umbilical cord. This custom certainly goes back to remote antiquity. Among the Egyptians, the fig tree was considered sacred and dedicated to the Egyptian Venus, Hathor. From this perhaps comes the word éthu, designating a garment made from the bast of the fig tree. The same word, éthu, has remained in the Fan language with the same meaning, "garment," and the inland Fan always make vegetable-fiber cloth from the fig tree, which they still dye red; this was formerly the color dedicated to Hathor, and it has remained the color of betrothal garments. For the same reason, before marriage, young men and women stain themselves red from head to foot. It is a color "set apart."

The practitioner operates quickly, assisted by the chief of the tribe. Before operating on each child, he hands the knife [525] to the chief, without a word, and the latter accepts it, also in silence, without saying the usual "thank you" or "very good," abora or mvɛ.

With girls none of these ceremonies are observed. An experienced matron performs the operation, usually when the child is very young. It is nevertheless a religious act, accompanied by songs and dances, but since only women are present, it was impossible for me to learn the slightest detail.

The tribal chief immediately returns the knife to the practitioner, saying, "Take it and do what has to be done." (Nɔ̂ɔ̂e n'ébo dzam ma yia n'ébo, lit., "Take it so as to do the deed which 'I' ought to do.") This proves that the practitioner is but the chief's delegate. Usually it is the latter who holds the penis firmly. First of all, the father pulls out the foreskin as far as possible and ties it with a bit of string. The penis, thus prepared, is then stretched out on a special board, and the practitioner cuts quickly. This is the most painful part of the operation. Ashes are then rubbed on the open wound. The head of the family carefully collects the blood, which will constitute a powerful fetish after it has been offered in sacrifice to the mvamayɔ̂ and to the ancestors.

It is a point of honor for the children not to cry out, no matter what the pain. Besides, the pain must be very much lessened by the fact that the chief squeezes the flesh firmly and the operator works quickly. As soon as it is over, the child is taken to be bathed and is then laid on a bed of ashes. His scanty clothing is removed, if that has not already been done during the preceding days, and he is now dressed in a loose garment or a belt from which hangs a thick pad of raffia fiber or thin strips of finely cut banana tree bark, so as to protect him from being hurt. After the operation every father offers the practitioner a present, often a sheep or at least several hens. The latter then, according to the customary rites, offers one of the sheep to the spirits and has part of it burnt. The ashes of the sacrifice, mixed with the collected blood, will constitute the child's fetish. Anything left over is carefully buried in a place

Only then will he be allowed to know about the laws and rights of the totem. He will then receive his personal totem, as we have described it, will make it the prescribed sacrifice, and will preciously keep the remains of this offering on his own person, enclosed in an antelope horn. Already as a child he wore this horn which now contain the ashes of this sacrifice; it used merely to hang around his neck on a cord or, more often, before his genital organs. After the youth becomes a warrior, he hangs the horn among the other fetishes attached to a leather baldrick which crosses his chest and is hardly ever taken off. [532]

c) Consecration of weapons

A youth's childhood ends after the initiation. A whole new era opens up before him, an era of work and fighting and also of quite different pleasures from those of childhood. He is henceforth admitted to a place among warriors after these painful initiations the proof and marks of which are slashes cut into the back of his neck. Henceforth he may carry a gun; as a boy he had often tried to fire one so as to be ready when the time came. As a warrior with the right to fire it and to go to war, he must first "dedicate" the rifle to a spirit so that he may always shoot straight.

For an African all objects whatever they may be, have a life of their own; therefore, a rifle is a being. Alive with its own life, it will be dedicated to the spirit with the influence most favorable to it, that is, in the realm of space the sun, whose light and whose clear rays will enable it to hit the mark every time and will at the same time dissipate the shadows so that they will fail to conceal the enemy it is aimed at. The weapon will be dedicated to the sun and also to the clan's totemic guardian; in battle it is indeed important to be able to distinguish enemy from friend and not to run the risk of committing a totemic sacrilege. The rifle must be dedicated to both the totem and the sun.

However, it is worth noting that if nowadays a rifle is the only weapon to be dedicated, it is because it has become the

The young man is armed. He has undergone the initiation of the bawu and henceforth he has a right to speak in the council. He will not take advantage of this until the day he brings in the hand of an enemy he has killed and he is able to testify to his bravery in the presence of all by this striking proof of a daring exploit, yet often carried out by surprise.

[Pp. 535-536, 18 lines of music.] [537]

III. Consecration of the Chief

a) The ceremony

A tribal chief has died. After the customary lamentation and funeral feast, he has been buried in a temporary grave. Thirty days afterwards the warriors again reassemble for the solemn funeral dance, the fanki. Then the eldest son, surrounded by leading warriors, opens his father's grave, climbs down beside the corpse, and with the consecrated knife detaches the skull, which will soon be added to the skulls of earlier ancestors in the évora biéri. Then the corpse is carefully replaced in the grave, and the totemic sacrifices are completed. We shall go back to these sacrifices when discussing individual mortuary rites. The eldest son or the heir removes the akaméyôn or tribal totem, if he has not already done so. He then throws the earth back onto the corpse and everyone helps him in this dismal task, after he has thrown the first handfuls. All these rites belong to the social mortuary ceremonial.

The new chief returns to the village. Then begins strictly speaking, the totemic rite of consecration, which takes place at night, without any female observers.

Escorted by all the warriors, to the beating of a tom-tom, the chief takes the évora biéri containing the ancestral skulls and carries it into the forest. The ceremony is secret only as regards women; young boys may be present.

The box of skulls is put on a sort of platform made of newly cut poles. These must come from a special tree, the éfufua, and must all be alive and green. A bit of dead wood

779 778 622 would lead to a ritual offense. These branches are embedded in the earth; they must also be straight, cut from the actual trunk of the tree and not from a branch; upon these poles stuck into the ground, the chief arranges pieces of bamboo (1) which

[342 124]

1. Bamboo is the usual term given by analogy to the palm stems or raffia used in all Fan building, in place of real bamboo, which is unknown or a recent importation into Gabon.

[284] make a platform. They are tied together, not with the lianas usual for huts, but with lashings [538] made of rattan palm. When that work has been done, the chief places his évora bièri on the upper tier; the other family heads put their bivora bibiér to the right and left in order of precedence. When all the boxes of skulls have been lined up, each man, after having danced and sung around the altar, then approaches it again, opens his box, removes the ancestral skulls, and places them on the lower tier below the boxes. Upon his family skulls he places the family totem, then his own personal totem. There is another series of dances, accompanied by songs. The chief then advances again, alone, and puts the skull of his immediate ancestor above all the others, dances and sings, then puts the skull inside that of the first ancestor. He also takes his family totem, which by the very fact of his birth is the tribal or clan totem, and places it upon the two superimposed skulls, his father's and that of the clan father. Then there begins a special song called the Song of Union. The archaic words are nowadays for the most part very hard to understand, the general meaning, on the other hand, is easy to grasp: it deals with the uniting of all the heads of families in direct line and consists of an invocation to the Spirit of the Race, who has passed down through all descendants from the first ancestor so as to produce a united and indivisible whole. The final words of the song express this idea quite clearly:

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At the same time, the chief has taken his father's and his first forefather's skulls; he approaches successively the évora bièri of each of the other heads of family and touches their ancestral skulls against those in his hands. He returns to the middle, takes the pot holding the victim's blood, dips his father's ée, fly swatter, or into it, and then sprinkles the totems placed near the skulls. He takes his own totem, moves it alongside the clan or tribal totems, fastens them together with a liana and touches them successively against the totems of the other heads of family, while singing the totem song, everyone repeating the refrain after him:

[539]

We are the children of Ndun,
And Ndun is our totem (mvamayôl),
Yes, we are the children of Ndun,
And Ndun is totem for us all.

After this ceremony there are several more dances and songs. Finally at the end, the tribal chief is the first to put the skulls back into the évora bièri, and everyone follows his example. He does the same thing with the totems, again followed by all the others. [540] All the boxes are then carefully put aside in a spot cleared in advance.

• [118]

All return to the open space. The rude altar, where the boxes, skulls, and totems had lain, is destroyed; the boxes are all heaped one upon the other; and great care is taken that no drop of the victim's blood that might have fallen on the ground be profaned by any touch at all. As soon as the victim itself has been immolated, it is laid on freshly cut green banana leaves -- it must never touch the ground -- and placed upon a pyre made from the altar wood, which is lighted. This task always falls to the new chief, never the practitioner. As soon as the victim has been cooked enough, it is put back on the banana leaves and cut up by the chief himself into as many pieces as there are persons present. No piece may be left over; no piece may be carried away. That would be a ritual offense of the gravest kind, and the Fan are convinced, or at least appear to be so, that the totem never fails to punish the wrongdoing by actual death of the

361 the sites of future huts with blood. The hen is then opened up
621 and divided among the principal warriors and the chief's relatives.
769 This strictly speaking, constitutes the totemic sacrifice. The
782 kid or sheep is then offered to the spirits of departed souls and to the ancestors.

After the sacrifice to ancestors the chief puts the akamé'ém
361 back at his side. From the mfex or pouch, which is never re-
621 moved, he draws forth a small bundle of dirty material wrapped
769 around a bit of red wood, ashes, and a few bones. All this
• 718 comes from a sacrifice to the totem like that already described.
To these he adds the remnants of the recent sacrifice and buries
[820] it all deep in a hole in which he drives a strong stake of élun
or élirira wood; sometimes a young ebony tree is also used.
[822 At the top of the stake he fixes a ball of paste made of red wood,
842] white chalk -- the colors of sacrifices and spirits, and manioc,
the symbol of fertility. A part of the clan or tribal totem is
also inserted. The practitioner, with many gestures, songs,
and dances imprisons within it all the evil spirits of the air.
[556]

The practitioner sows maize in the middle of the village,
then plants a manioc root and particularly a euphorbia (euphorbia
antiquorum), and puts a small fence around, so that the plants
[187] will not be desecrated. The village's prosperity depends upon their
rapid growth. Should they wither, the chosen spot will be
[134] abandoned. Euphorbia has the power of averting thunder and evil
spirits by means of its bristling points. Amaryllis and
immortelles are often planted at the foot of the euphorbia, along
with a few stalks of sugar cane. The amaryllis and immortelles
ought to come from the old village, having issued from those
which the chief's first wife had formerly brought from her
[892] native village at her marriage. Sugar cane is a symbol of
fertility.

241 The women plant maize everywhere after these preliminaries, and its rapid growth ensures basic subsistence. Mean-
361 while the men build the huts. The first ears of maize will certainly be offered to the guardian totem. Dried and preserved in the form of a coronet, they will provide seed for the following year.

7: Trilles--112 M-6 (1893-1912) 1912 FH9 Fang FH9

1. Birth and Name Giving

[846 844] Only women, the village matrons, are allowed to help a mother in childbirth. Men are absolutely excluded, even husbands. A woman who gives birth on a journey prefers to go off by herself into the forest rather than ask for her husband's help.

As soon as the child is delivered, his umbilical cord is cut and he is carefully washed. The remnants of the cord are wrapped in a cloth and buried out of the way. In the case of a chief's son, especially that of the head chief, the remains are buried, as we have seen, at the foot of a sacred fig tree. (1)

[824 775]

1. Ficus elastica.

Great importance is given to the tree's growth, and to touch it is strictly forbidden. Any violation of the tree would be considered an attack upon the human being.

[849]

A few days after birth, the baby is carried to his father, [851] who may accept it or refuse it. However, the latter [871] happens only if the child is deformed or crippled, in which [847] case it is ruthlessly sacrificed. The religious rites (1) connected [853] with birth are numerous, but the only ones that seem to me to be totemic are name giving and the choice of the baby's totem.

1. See Bulletin de la Société Neuchâteloise de Géographie [Bulletin of the Neuchâtel Geographical Society], 1910, "Les rites de la naissance chez les Fân" [Birth Rites among the Fang], by Father Trilles.

The name is solely the father's choice; it is often determined by attendant circumstances, atmospheric or other, or by some local happening, a hunt, a fishing expedition, the

arrival of a stranger. Hence, a certain number of names that at first would seem totemic, because they copy the names of animals and plants, are not so at all. In general, the eldest son's name is that of one of his forebears, a grandfather or ancestor, who is thought to come to life again in him. Twins, however, always receive special names of matched things, which go in twos, like Sun and Moon, Wind and Rain, Storm and Thunder, etc.

As soon as the child has been given a name, his father takes it in his arms and carries it into his hut, where he opens the *fvora bidri* and puts the baby down on the lid. He then takes the ancestral skulls one by one and puts them on the child's head, then places the family totem in its hand. The father with his fingernail often scrapes a bit off of the antelope horn holding the remnants of his personal totemic sacrifice, and puts some of this into the child's mouth. This, strictly speaking, is the dedication to the totem. The father then takes the baby back to its mother so that she may anoint it with oil and rub it with red wood. After the mother, or any other woman present, has attended to this, the father again takes the child and puts another bit of the totem into its mouth. A she-goat, a sheep, or at least a fowl is then offered to the family totem and to the spirits of the departed, according to sacred ritual. The remains of this sacrifice, the ashes, etc., are enclosed in a small antelope horn, which is hung around the baby's neck or above his genital organs: this will be his amulet. Finally, the father gives the baby his personal totem, which will be recalled to him later on when he is old enough to understand. At that same time he will be taught what are the family, clan, and tribal totems, and the duties and obligations they impose on him. This instruction is part of the *mibara*. [177]

2. Adoption

In certain cases, a few children are adopted by a head of the family when given as ransom for murder or spared in the

8: Bennett D-5 (ca. 1898) 1899 FH9 Fang FH9

ideas as the Bulu regarding two great gods. The *Zambe* of the Bulu is the *Anyambi* or *Sikhtor* of the Fang, the *tate* or father of all things; and another god of less power than *Anyambi* or *Sikhtor*, who lives in the forests and is so tall that he gathers fruit from the highest trees. Some of the old men and women profess to have seen this god of the forests.

Fang superstition includes transmigration; a departed human soul may enter any animal dwelling on top of the earth or in it. There are spirits of health and disease, also a protecting spirit belonging to a clan or tribe, in whose honour a small basket is hung in the palaver house, containing portions of the skull of an albino, whenever obtainable, also portions of the skulls of a relative and a chimpanzee, human hair, nails and bones. This fetish or *bieng* is called the *Bieng Akomeyong*. Most Fang have a cabalistic word assigned to them by the nyengan (witch doctor), and this word is used as a prayer. During the new moon, dances are nearly always indulged in, and the songs usually addressed to the spirits of Present and Future. Local spirits need constant propitiation; a native passing in his canoe a spot where a local spirit dwells, as a large rock, will pay his respects by casting a piece of his food into the river, or when in the forest a few stones or a piece of *mbile* (cassava) is laid at the root of some great tree.

Woyden idols are not plentiful among the Fang tribes living along the rivers; they are seen more in the palaver houses of the bush towns.

Charms.—These may be only cabalistic words, and under this head of vocal charms must be included the incantations of the nyengan (witch doctor).

Material charms.—These are by far the most common; the belief in material charms, fetish, occupies the most prominent place in Fang religious contemplation.

Among the Fang, the English word Fetish, from the Portuguese word Feitiço, is *Bieng* (medicine). A Fang fetish is any material object which the nyengan (doctor) has consecrated and made a fit abiding place for a spirit. What may be consecrated? Anything, absolutely anything; a shell, rag, stone, twig of a tree, bones, nails, etc. The horns of small antelope and large deer are filled with resins, nails, human hair, faeces, etc. To bewitch a person it is necessary to give the nyengan a piece of the hair, nail, a portion of the food or a drop of blood of the person to be bewitched. A Fang is most careful if he cuts himself to see that only friends and relations approach him until the bleeding has ceased, and hair when cut is usually burnt without delay. As mentioned in the section of this paper on food, every child during infancy is subjected to certain rites which constitute *nlo* or her *Ebi*, prohibiting the child from eating a certain kind of food or performing a certain act. Thus far, the superstitious beliefs of the Fang and Bulu are precisely similar, and I gathered from Dr. Nassau at Gaboon many facts connected with the people among whom he laboured, the Mpongwe, which showed that they also hold superstitious beliefs very nearly, and in some cases precisely similar to those of the Bulu and Fang, the only difference being in the

8: Bennett D-5 (ca. 1898) 1899 F319 Fang F319

name, the *Ebo* of the Fang being the *Orunda* of the Mpongwe. One day when on a journey among the people, I asked an old headman to share with me a chicken my boy had prepared for supper; the old man seemed pleased at my invitation, but asked the boy if it was a hen or cock fowl. Upon being informed that it was a cock, he declined to eat *any* of it—that was his *Ebo*. As previously stated, I do not believe the natives worship the spirits of Present and Future, but to a certain degree ancestral worship does exist. A Fang places the skull of his father in a curious receptacle of bark, worshipping it, killing fowls and making blood offerings to it, and in many ways the whole matter somewhat resembles the worshipping at graves and before ancestral tablets as practised in China. The natives often pray to their father's skull before talking a large war palaver, or the purchase of a new woman. As worshipping departed ancestors is the *chief duty* of a faithful Chinaman, so making offerings and prayers to the departed father's spirit before the skull constitutes the great Fang fetish, or *bieri*. Wooden idols, *bijeme*, of men and women are made in a manner which makes the sex extremely apparent; yet, wherever I have seen these figures in towns, the people did not seem to regard them as obscene, but as truthful representations of the sexes. I feel sure that to some extent, at least, phallic worship is practised among the Fang. Spirits are everywhere; in rocks, trees, forests, and streams; in fact, for the Fang, this life is one continual fight against spirits corporal and spiritual.

A peculiar belief regarding dreams is that when a person sleeps the soul often wanders away, and its experiences on these journeys are made known to the sleeper by dreams. After death the soul may inhabit any kind of animal.

Fetish Bieng (medicine).—Fetish means anything: leopard teeth, human finger nails, hair, wood, iron, herbs. The article used as *bieng* or fetish, has no intrinsic value, it is only valued because of connecting its owner with a spirit which can aid him. The leopard tooth fetish is supposed to impart the bravery of the leopard to its owner. Fetish is a spirit or combination of spirits manifested in material things.

Dibi Bieri.—To murder a person and save his skull as a fetish, or use the skull as medicine to bring women, guns, goats or goods. The people will make offerings to the skulls calling them by the names of persons killed. It is said that these prayers are always answered as desired.

Bieng-i-bili (hiding medicine).—A man goes and takes leaves of trees, and cuts them up. He says, "I have cut up leaves of trees" (or high grass, bushes). The women shell ground nuts and mash them. They catch a fowl, kill it, and put it in the pot. They also put in the pot the medicine leaves, and the mashed ground kernels. They put the pot on the fire, and boil (its contents). When they have boiled it, the medicine is cooked. They take the medicine pot off (the fire). They go and put it by the side of (*afiak*) the back of the *bieri*. The man who has put it there says to the *bieri*, other people want to kill me. He takes away the medicine pot. He opens the *bieri* basket. He takes a small piece of the bone (instead of this say to the women and children he takes the excrement of the